AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. *(Currently Amended)* A method for packaging a product in a hermetically sealed container having a cup-shaped rigid or semi-rigid body provided with a rim fitted with solely a single closure, the method comprising:

a) introducing the product into said cup-like shaped body;

b) placing the container into a holder beneath and concentrically with a central opening of a spacer member;

c) providing above the rim solely a single flat, flexible closure-forming, gas-impermeable membrane, said membrane extending between the spacer member and a pressing plate;

d) relative vertically displacing the holder and the spacer member without displacing the membrane so as to form proximate to the rim a confined space, said space having at least one gas inlet and at least one gas outlet, said space being defined by an upper part of the container body, by the closure-forming membrane, by an inwardly facing surface of the central opening and by a peripheral portion of the holder, said confined space being formed adjacent to the rim and at a distance therefrom;

e) introducing an inert replacement gas through said inlet into said confined space in order to expel from the container body at least a substantial portion of gas originally contained in the container body and replace it with the inert replacement gas;

f) displacing ~~crosspressing~~ said container body ~~further~~ to bring the closure-forming membrane in contact with said rim; and

g) hermetically attaching the membrane to the rim to form a gas-tight seal therebetween.

2. (*Original*) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said product is a pasty material.

3. (*Original*) A method according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein said product is a food product.

4. (*Previously presented*) A method according to Claim 1, wherein the closure-forming membrane is a plastic film.

5. (*Previously presented*) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said confined space is brought in communication with the external atmosphere via the said gas outlet.

6. (*Previously Presented*) A method according to Claim 1, wherein said confined space is brought in communication with a vacuum forming means via the said gas outlet.

7-16 Canceled.

17. *(Previously Presented)* The method according to claim 1 wherein the inert gas is nitrogen or carbon dioxide.

18. Canceled.

19. *(Previously Presented)* The method according to claim 1 wherein the gas-impermeable membrane is gas impermeable in its entirety and is directly adjacent the product there being no

physical element between the product and the gas impermeable membrane.

20. Canceled.